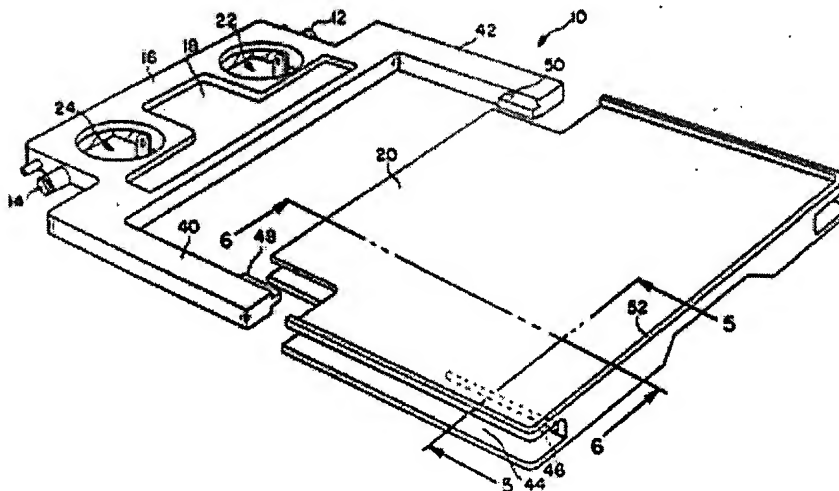


Remarks

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the requirements of original claim 3, and claim 3 has been canceled. Claims 1, 2, and 4-12 remain pending. The current amendment also addresses and corrects the various claim objections and section 112 rejections raised in the previous Office action.

Amended claim 1 corresponds to originally filed claim 3, which the previous Office action rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,092,652 to Macaluso. Specifically, the Examiner contended that Fig. 1 of Macaluso taught a table including a main section and as removably attachable end section that included "at least two engagement sites for mutual inter-engagement ... on each section, with the engagement sites of each section being spaced along the length thereof, the first engagement site closest the end of the respective section being adapted to engage on an upper surface, and the second engagement site more distant from the end being adapted to engage on a lower surface" as required by claim 1. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Examiner referenced elements 44, 48 and 50 in Fig. 1 as teaching such an engagement arrangement, but these structures are clearly intended to slide into place linearly, along a guide that is co-linear with the table surface such that the engagement occurs in the center of the structures at each end, not respective upper surfaces and lower surfaces as required by claim 1:



Moreover claim 1 requires that each of the main section and the removable end section be adapted to have one engagement site closer to the end which is on an upper surface of that section and another engagement site at a farther end which is on a lower surface of that section to mutually inter-engage with each other. It is clear from the Macaluso figure that the main section 10 and the removable end section 20 do not each have such an arrangement.

Although the foregoing is enough to demonstrate the patentability of the pending claims over the Macaluso reference, Applicant also respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's assertion that the term "a patient table" has no bearing on the patentability of the claims over the Macaluso reference. The difference between the structure disclosed in Macaluso and that required by the claims may or may not be meaningful in the context of an airline table as per Macaluso since such a table is light and easily supported while being aligned. But a patient table as defined in claim 1 is typically relatively heavy to be able to support the upper body of the patient concerned. Thus, the join must also be a very snug fit so that there is little "play" that might allow it to slip or wobble; either could affect the treatment and/or upset the patient. In the specific example described in the present application, the field of activity is radiotherapy in which a powerful beam of radiation is directed to the patient. In such an application it is essential that the patient's position does not change or else the wrong area could be irradiated. The join between the two table sections therefore needs to be very secure.

These factors mean that a sliding join such as that in Macaluso would need to be tight if applied to a patient table. To hold a heavy item such as this at waist height while aligning a sliding join having the necessary narrow tolerances would be very tiring and probably impossible for many hospital nursing staff. The claimed invention shows a stable and secure connection between the two sections, which is straightforward to attach with wide tolerances. There is little need to obtain precise alignment as the claimed arrangement can drop into place itself.

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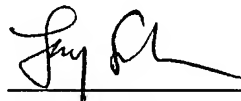
Thus, the Macaluso reference neither anticipates nor makes obvious the patient table required by claim 1. Claims 2 and 4-12 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for the same reasons.

Conclusion

Applicants hereby request a two month extension of time in accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136. A check for the amount of \$430.00 is enclosed for the fee for the two month extension of time. Applicants believe that no further extension of time is required; however, this conditional petition is being made to provide for the possibility that the applicants have inadvertently overlooked the need for a further additional extension of time. If any additional fees are required for the timely consideration of the application, please charge deposit account number 19-4972.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants believe this application is now in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this amendment, that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to call applicants' attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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